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FILIPINO MARTIAL ARTS

THIS BOOK MAY BE CONSIDERED AS AN INTRODUCTION TO THE VARIOUS FILIPINO MARTIAL ARTS, INCLUDING ARNIS, SILAT, KALI, SIKARAN, LAWIDAN, BULTONG, GABBO, SANGGOL, TORSI ETC. PREVIOUSLY TAKEN FOR GRANTED, THEY WERE BEING RELEGATED TO THE FATE OF THE "LOST ART" WHEN A SUDDEN INTEREST IN ORIENTAL MARTIAL ARTS—NOTABLY KUNG FU, KARATE AND THE LIKE—CAUSED A SUDDEN REVIVAL OF INTEREST TOWARD THEM.

IF ONLY TO SUBMIT THEM FOR APPRECIATION AND SCRUTINY, THEY ARE BEING PRESENTED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

The author, Nid Anima, has a number of sports books to his name, including The Jerry West Story and Filipino Indigenous Games.

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1982

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NID ANIMA

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A genuine copy of this book bears a coded serial number as well as the signatures of the author.

Serial No. 0534

For my son,

Yuri

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PRELIMINARY PERSPECTIVE

Although history points to the latter half of the 19th century as the time martial arts was first introduced into the Philippines by settlers from Celebes – particularly Tubbah, Sahudah and Wabulong – it should nevertheless be considered as an ancient sport among the Filipinos, for what was brought by the three masters was merely **kuntao.** The probability of their being indigenous cannot be overlooked, otherwise a terrible mistake may be committed. If it has to be termed "terrible," it can only be because history happens to be involved and history is no joking matter: it demands utmost accuracy.

The prowess of the Filipino in martial arts is legendary and nothing attests this better than its variety of forms. To cite merely a few, **kali, silat, silaga, sikaran, lawidan, lagot, bultong, arnis, balsakan, gabbo, lampungan,** etc. What has been enumerated is not even half as many as the total

number; there are really so much more.

But more important than numbers is their indigenous nature. They have been invented locally by their respective exponents. In cases where a particular martial art evolved from a foreign source, as in **kuntao** transforming into **lagot** when the Samals adopted it, the Filipino ethnic groups responsible for it has bestowed such martial art with innovations and refinements that makes it unrecognizable from its former form, in which dressing it becomes unmistakably Filipino. Its present form has been so modified that it could no longer identify with its former features, becoming an entirely different and distinct entity, somehow boasting the Filipino's burgeoning image as an innovator par excellent.

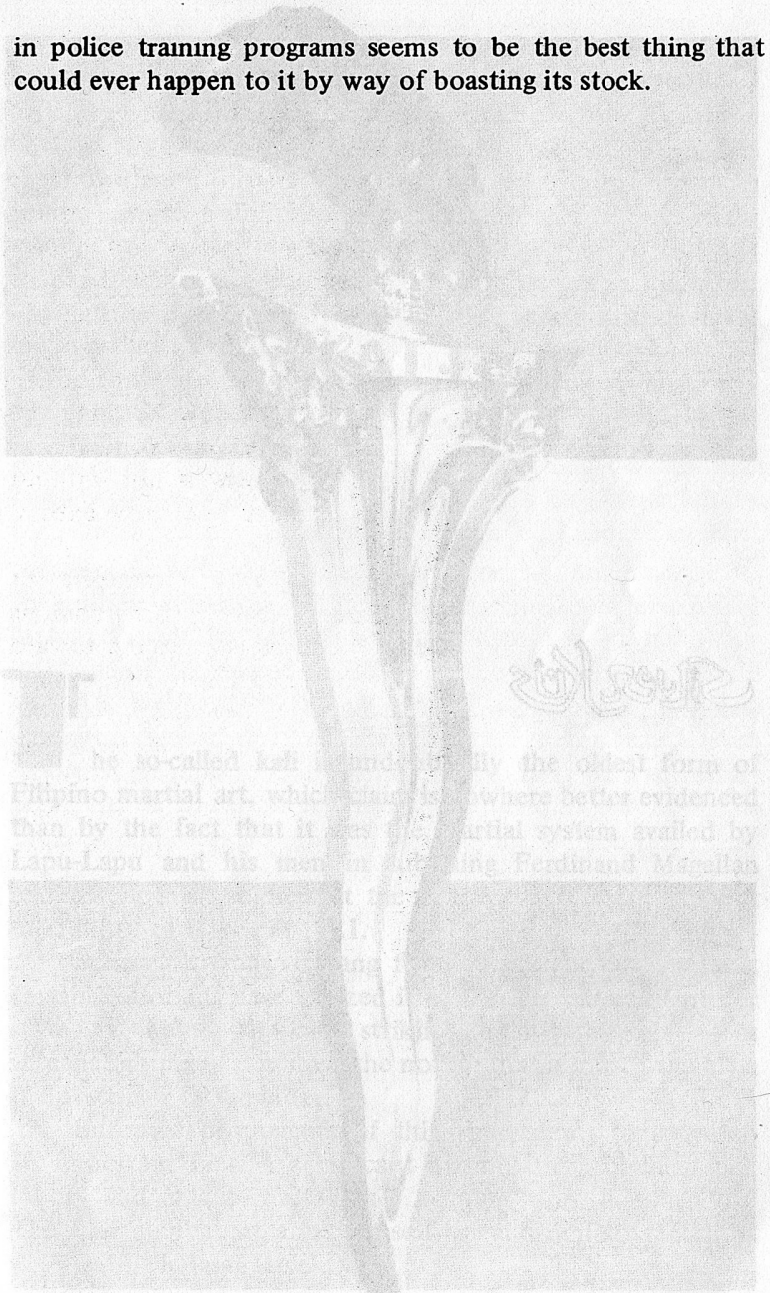
The state of indigenous martial arts is not without a sad touch to it, though, most of them being now extinct or, if not yet, then on the way to extinction.

The are seldom staged and if ever this transpires at all, it takes place in the rural areas. Never in the populous places where they enjoy better chances of surging toward popularity and resurgence. Their destination toward extinction and oblivion are clearly, if definitely, marked.

Quest for explanations spotlight the Filipino's bad habit: that of not appreciating his own culture. He just lets them drift away. He is more pre-occupied with absorbing foreign culture, especially that of the West. His tendency to become Occidental is such that, eventually, he becomes more Occidental than a genuine Occidental. This is quite noticeable in so many areas of his personality – in his attire, accent and speech, music, architecture, etc.

Filipino martial arts does not seem headed for extinction, after all – thanks to the resurgence of world-wide interest toward **kung fu, taek-wan-do** and **kendo,** among others. **Arnis** is being re-examined, probably in the hope that there's something to it as special as those of the other Oriental martial systems, explaining the renaissance it presently enjoys. Further bolstering its stock has something to do with its inclusion in cultural shows where before there's only reluctance to do so. That it has been adopted

in police training programs seems to be the best thing that could ever happen to it by way of boasting its stock.



KALI

The so-called **kali** is undoubtedly the oldest form of Filipino martial art, which claim is nowhere better evidenced than by the fact that it was the martial system availed by Lapu-Lapu and his men in subduing Ferdinand Magellan and his Spanish soldiers at the beaches of Mactan on that fateful day of March in 1521.

Believed to have sprang from Panay and its environs, certain historians have utilized it as the alternative name for **sayaw at sinulog.** The **kali's** striking similarity to **arnis** – that is, canefighting – conjured the notion that it must have been the precursor of the latter.

But avid proponents of this view seems to overlook an important fact. A significant dissimilarity debunks such theory and makes it altogether nothing more than a myth. The **kali** combatant arms himself, in addition to the short pole, with a **kalasag** (shield).

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Actually, **kali** means bladed weapons. The Moros have a number of it in the **kris, gunong, kali, barong, kampilan, laring, banjal, punal, pira, utak, panabas, bangkon** and **lahot.** It is the **kris,** however, which enjoys the status of the by-word.

Like the **arnis,** the **kali** is seldom deadly, a feature that makes it conducive to impromptu stage entertainment. The **kali** and its other counterparts are dead art now, at best relegated to the role of an occasional folk entertainment. Only a handful aging folks can boast a certain knowledge of them.

Much of the **kali's** original attraction has gone after degenerating into a folk dance executed to the accompaniment of fast and lively music, as usually practiced in some remote areas of Iloilo. That's how it evolved into what came to be identified as **sayaw at sinulog.**

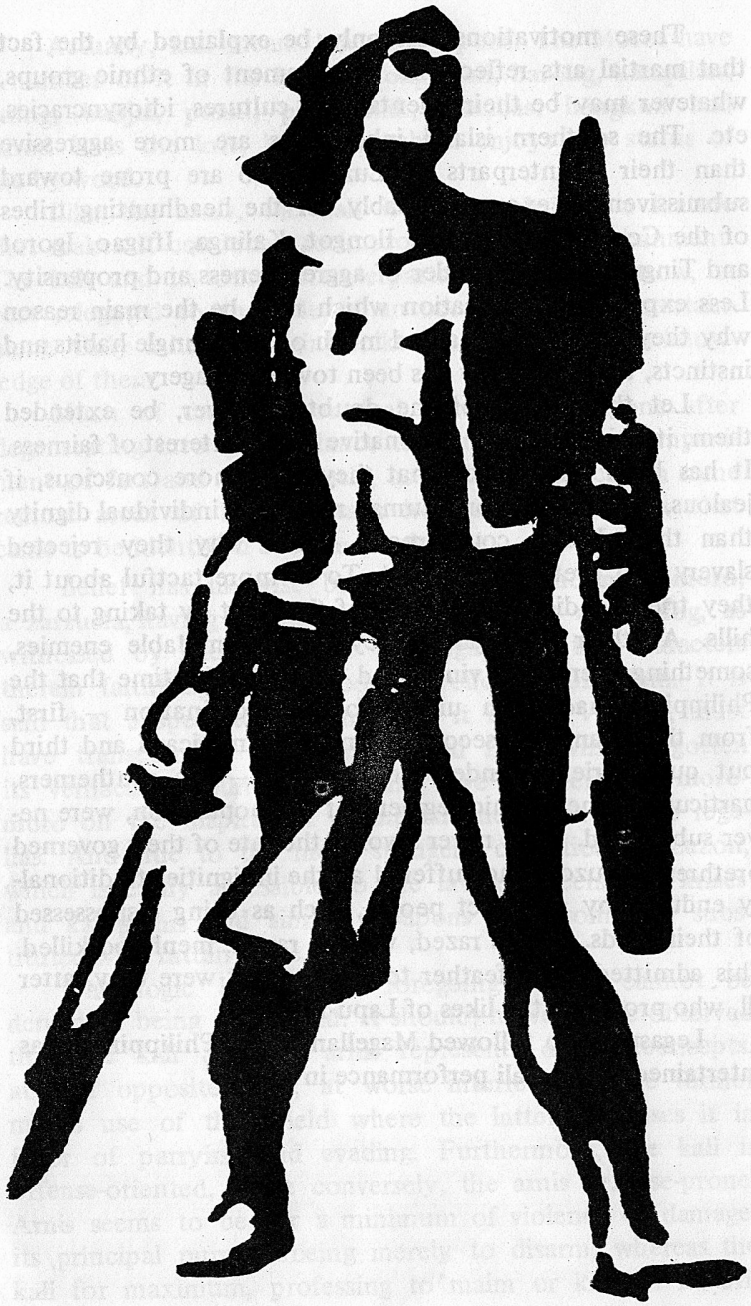
Belief has likewise been rife as to the **moro-moro,** a **zarzuela,** having originated from the **sayaw at sinulog,** as witnessed by the fact that the regalia of the characters therein faithfully symbolized the followers of Islam. It is said that a spectator, having seen it in the Visayas, must have transplanted it in Luzon and for having forgotten its vernacular counterpart, must have christened it **moro-moro** on the inspiration of the Islamic touch of the regalias. And due to the more stringent condition in Luzon, which is easily accessible to the law enforcers, the **krises** and **kampilans** and similar weapons were somehow substituted with rattan poles.

The logic behind the foregoing theory cannot be denied, it being quite valid. It should, however, be observed that the **kali** and the **arnis** represents diverse concepts, at best opposite ones, at worse interrelated. The former makes use of the shield where the latter dispenses it in favor of parrying and evading. Furthermore, the **kali** is offense-oriented, while conversely, the **arnis** defense-prone. **Arnis** seems to be for a minimum of violence or damage, its principal purpose being merely to disarm, whereas the **kali** for maximum, professing to maim or kill. In its original form, at least; not the sanitized version.

These motivations can only be explained by the fact that martial arts reflect the temperament of ethnic groups, whatever may be their orientations, cultures, idiosyncracies, etc. The southern island inhabitants are more aggressive than their counterparts in Luzon who are prone toward submissiveness, except probably for the headhunting tribes of the Cordilleras, namely: Ilongot, Kalinga, Ifugao, Igorot and Tinguian, in that order of aggressiveness and propensity. Less exposed to civilization which may be the main reason why they have not discarded much of their jungle habits and instincts, their tendency has been toward savagery.

Let the benefit of the doubt, however, be extended them, it being the only alternative in the interest of fairness. It has been rationalized that they were more conscious, if jealous, of their freedom, human rights and individual dignity than their Luzon counterparts, that's why they rejected slavery and preferred to fight. To be more tactful about it, they tried to dictate the rules of the fight by taking to the hills. At their own game, they were formidable enemies, something eventually vindicated as, in all the time that the Philippines had been under foreign domination – first, from the Spaniards, second, from the Americans and third but quite briefly, under the Japanese – the southerners, particularly the Islamic segment of the population, were never subjugated. They never savored the fate of their governed brethren in Luzon who suffered all the indignities traditionally endured by a subject people, such as being dispossessed of their lands, homes razed, women raped, menhood killed. This admittedly is a feather to their cap. It were they, after all, who produced the likes of Lapu-Lapu.

Legaspi, who followed Magellan to the Philippines, was entertained with a **kali** performance in 1565.



LAPU-LAPU: The Martial Artist

There is no other way to interpret the exploits of ancient Filipino **barangay** chieftain Lapu-Lapu at the Cebu-islet of Mactan when he vanquished in a beach encounter an alien contingent of invaders which later came to be identified as Magellan and his men than to consider it as prowess in martial arts of the first order. In other words, Lapu-Lapu was a martial artist. Let not history lose sight of this fact.

But so do most of the leaders of the revolution were reputed as such — Antonio Luna, Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, Gregorio del Pilar and Andres Bonifacio, to name just a handful. Knowledge of this art seemed to come in handy toward the pursuit of their patriotic mission.

The aforecited view becomes tenable if it were to be remembered that Lapu-Lapu and his men were fighting at a handicap: they were merely armed with bladed weapons cum shields, not to mention fire-tipped lances and bows

and poisoned arrows.

The adversary, on the other hand, were equipped with sophisticated weaponry: guns and cannons.

They had to fight because Lapu-Lapu preferred to reject vassalage, a gesture that was to characterize the reactions of the Filipinos in the south toward the Spanish rule in the country. While the Luzon inhabitants, specifically the majority ethnic groups, were subject, not the Muslim population. They never capitulated to Spanish rule. And let it be observed that Islam antedated Christianity by a century, having arrived as early as the fourteenth century, while Magellan brought Christianity over on March 16, 1521 when he landed on these shores.

The writings of Pigafetta, the expedition's chronicler, provides a comprehensive picture of what actually transpired at Mactan. It would seem that Lapu-Lapu employed an ingenious trick by requesting Magellan to defer his attack till morning, if only to provide the former more time to gather his men. It is reminiscent of the tale of the monkey and the turtle wherein the latter implored the former to throw him anywhere except into the water and that was what the monkey exactly did: throw him into the water! Little did the monkey realize that by doing so, it was throwing its captive into its habitat.

In so far as Lapu-Lapu is concerned, the night is the most propitious time to fight the invaders because he had ordered his men to dig deadfalls in the spaces between their houses, aside from the fact that the enemy would be at a disadvantage from viewing their adversaries.

By attacking at dawn, Magellan baited. Lapu-Lapu's men were ready – with bows and poisoned arrows (for long-distance assault), spears and lances tipped with fire (for intermediate and close-range encounters) and **kalis** (the blades, not to be confused with the system of martial art itself) and **kampilans** (for in-fighting).

To show that he was in command of the situation, he deferred attacking the disembarking Spanish soldiers, preferring to wait for them ashore. The plan behind this decision was to place the enemy at a position of weakness,

a veritable trapped rat. They were unprotected at the front and with the sea behind them, retreat (if and when this becomes necessary) was difficult. The cannons at the ship cannot be utilized for the simple reason that to explode them would not only create a toll on the natives but also to the Spaniards themselves who, having chosen to mix it up, had become indistinguishable with the enemy. To avoid hitting them was impossible. Any decision to fire at the combatants would invariably include colleagues among the casualties; that's why such course of action was vetoed.

The entry on Pigafetta's record book of what actually transpired: follows, to quote: "When we reached land, those men had formed into three divisions (numbering more than one thousand five hundred). When they saw us, they charged down upon us with exceeding loud cries, two divisions on our flanks and the other on our front . . . . When our muskets were discharged, the natives would never stand still, but leaped hither and thither, covering themselves with shields."

Note the word "shields," which is a significant feature of **kali**-fighting.

What really infuriated the natives was to witness their village in flames, their houses on fire. This was done on orders of Magellan who certainly underestimated the reaction that such an option would draw, believing that it would terrify the enemy into submission. He was proven wrong.

With added vengeance, Lapu-Lapu's men were shooting down with their bows and poisoned arrows, unable to create any effect on the armoured vests and steel helmets of the invaders, toward the legs, and for the first time in the ensuing battle, a headway was made. The Spaniards showed vulnerability, their proverbial Achilles' heel was, at last, exposed!

Magellan himself got hit on the right leg. His efforts to get back at his attacker – he tried to draw his sword to naught – proved futile, as, before he could even unsheath his weapon, he was speared at the arm. This was followed by a hacking of his leg, prompting the valiant warrior to fall down flat on his face. Everything that happened thereafter was anti-climactic.

This particular exploit by Lapu-Lapu earned for him a larger than life reputation, preferably comparison to the generalship of China's Sun-Tzu.

Magellan's death was not without a significant post-script to it. It seems that Rajah Humabon tried to ransom his remains, but Lapu-Lapu, in the tradition of typical martial arts gallantry, refused to surrender it for ". . . all the riches in the world," opting to keep it as a veritable memorial.

SAYAW AT SINULOG

A dance form of the early Filipinos, **The sayaw at sinulog** used to be popular in Panay and its environs. Initial impression of being a dance exudes its being misplaced in a book on martial arts such as this erstwhile work.

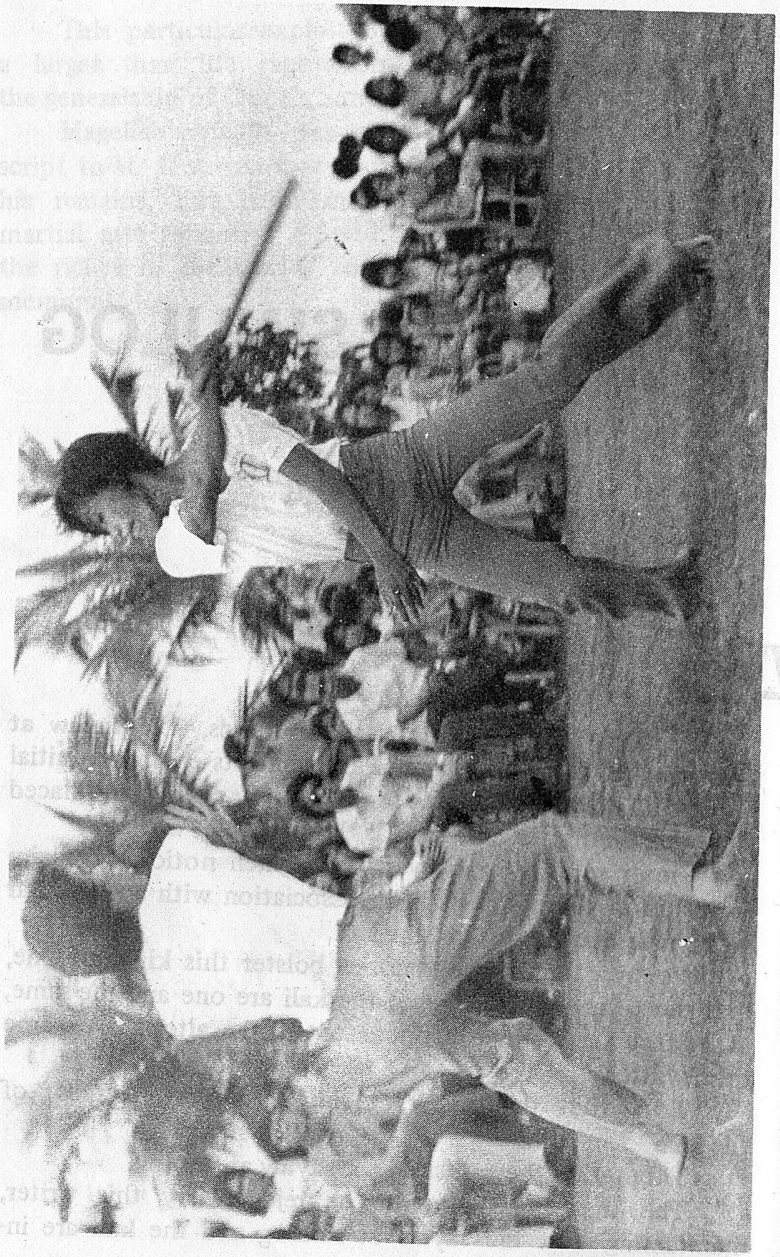
Closer scrutiny, however, belies such notion. Its claim to inclusion thereof rests in its association with a particular indigenous martial system, **the kali.**

No less than three theories bolster this kinship. One, that the **sayaw at sinulog** and the **kali** are one and the same, as in fact the former happens to be the alternative name of the latter.

Two, that the **sayaw at sinulog** is the precursor of the **kali.**

Three, that the **kali** sired the **sayaw at sinulog.**

The first theory has to be rejected by this writer, maintaining that the **sayaw at sinulog** and the **kali** are in-



dependent entities and could not possibly be one and the same — the first being a dance form, while the latter a martial system.

So with the second theory. One school of thought (among local historians, that is) entertains the belief that dance forms evolved into martial arts.

This writer shares the vice-versa belief: that it is the martial systems which degenerated into dance forms, particularly war dances. In support of such contention, two examples commonly cited to the point of abuse are the **sayaw at sinulog** of Panay and the **binabayani** of the Aetas of Zambales.

Expediency seems to have dictated this direction. The country was then under Spanish rule. The authorities, steeped in the apprehension that this may be used in rebellion, were repulsive to the idea of the native being knowledgeable in any form of martial system whatsoever, in which instance it would make them formidable enemies. The prohibition was on pain of severe penalties. Anybody apprehended violating such injunction was jailed.

As a form of counter-measure, the natives conjured that their martial arts might as well be set into dance, if only to bestow it with a harmless appearance. As such, it could be practiced openly sans any fear of apprehension. The corresponding weapons were retained as an authentic feature befitting the cultural motif therein.

But to further dispel any suspicions and, to a larger extent, prevent any accident, they had to be blunted. In this manner, the natives got the best of two worlds, as they could practice their art openly by occasionally holding entertainment fares. They could rehearse and at the same time be immune from punishment and arrest. This was how the **kali** evolved into the **sayaw at sinulog.**

Some kind of disparity may be spotted in such explanation. The **sayaw at sinulog** consequently became more popular than its precursor whose path had been travelling toward the direction of oblivion. Furthermore, the principal objective, which was to arouse the interest of the youth

as well as to educate them, was never achieved, except when they actually went into combat. The diminishing of the **kali** may have to be attributed to this.

Prior to concluding this chapter, a word about the **binabayani** is perhaps in order. Unlike the **sayaw at sinulog,** it is never the alternative name of a martial art, the Aeta martial system being purely archery in nature. Neither has it evolved from a martial art nor has it sired one. Furthermore, it has no comouflaging objectives, like a preparation for rebellious time-table and such things. It is merely what it is: a plain war dance.

BOTHOAN

In the early times, martial arts were very much a part of the school curriculum.

The institutions in which they were taught were known as **bothoan.** The regimen was somewhat difficult, as they were characterized by spartan drills and hard-cored discipline, all calculated to develop a strong physique on the part of the practitioner. To turn weaklings into he-men has always been the fundamental aim of martial arts.

Observed Rene J. Navarro: "The rituals of initiation are simple but tiring; the tea ceremony; the silent reception – all combine basic psychology and traditional ceremonies."

Over and above the spartan drills is the attainment of a state best described by the same author as ". . . where a simple exercise becomes imbued with mysticism and ritual." In other words, the ritual is never simple. It involves certain difficult aspects.

As such, not all the legion who opted to study martial arts were able to endure the difficult regimen. They were forced to discontinue. They clearly lose sight of the fact that just as Rome could not have been built in a day, so are the martial arts (any system, for that matter, whether karate, taek-wan-do, kung fu or what have you, never learned in a single day. It takes years, if not decades, to learn it. In some instances, it takes a lifetime. Never served in a silver platter, those who thought so found this out in a painful way.

Dedication and discipline of the first degree are required of a student. A long tradition, the screening and selection is exercised with extreme care.

A kind of discrimination in the teaching of martial arts seems apparent. Sometimes, only the favorite student, more often than not a member of the family, is recruited for the task. It is, therefore, not so accessible, as may be mistakenly believed. Not every Juan, Pedro or Jose can be a student. Anyone admitted has certainly gone a long way in proving an irreproachable moral character. This fact slams the door to outsiders.

Really, the recipient has to be exemplary. Like Caesar's wife, he must be above reproach and beyond suspicion. This, in addition to the necessary physical attributes, like strength, intelligence, agility, etc. It should be stressed that strength is not an all-important requirement, as this can be developed. This, after all, is the purpose: to develop an individual's physical potential.

Moreover, students are sworn to secrecy, like ancient China's fabled three wise monkey's who See No Evil, Speak No Evil, and Hear No Evil.

Severe punishment is meted against those who violate their oath. For every initiate takes an oath – to uphold righteousness at all times, if he can help it. In line with those of martial arts everywhere, particularly kung fu, knowledge of it shouldn't be utilized for gain or abuse. That seems to be the essence of martial arts.

Practitioners do not traditionally start a fight. Even if provoked, they try to check themselves up to the point

until the last straw breaks the camel's back. Only then can they retaliate. They have been literally pushed toward a wall where there is no more room behind to retreat.

It is a terrible mistake to regard martial arts as merely a physical weapon. Unknown to many is the reality that it is likewise a method geared toward the development of the mind, body and soul, presupposing that it possesses a religious aspect.

ANTING-ANTING

The association of the **anting-anting,** the Filipino vernacular term for talisman or amulet, with martial arts seems inevitable, if indispensable. The impression exuded by a man who possesses extraordinary powers, like fighting five or more foes simultaneously and besting them at that, is that he can only possess an **anting-anting.** Superior skill in fighting has been invariably confused with supernatural power, and people who gravitate toward such thinking cannot be blamed either. They have, after all, been oriented as such.

The singular factor obviously responsible for its concoction has something to do with the mysticism of the orient coupled with man's instinct for self-preservation. Man, by nature, is obsessed with immortality. He does not want to die, if possible; he wants to live forever.

One of the theories regarding the origin of the word **anting-anting** was advanced by Lorna Revilla-Montilla: that it was derived from the word "anti," or against. Logical though this theory may appear, it is nevertheless disputed by the fact that the **anting-anting** dates much earlier than the Americans from whom the word supposedly comes from. The viewpoint that it is purely a native word whose origin has been garbled and lost in the mist of time and circumstances is, therefore, the better and more logical inclination. It cannot be ascertained which of the native dialects is its real origin, whether Ilocano, Pangasinense, Tagalog. Bicolano, Cebuano, Waray-waray or what not. Anyway, its vernacular names include: **ginam-mol** or **galing-galing** in Ilocano; **agimat** or **mutya** in Tagalog, **likit** in Waray-waray; **odom** in Bicol; and **adimat** in Muslim. None of these give the real key to its origin.

The **anting-anting** is said to come in various forms – crocodile's tooth, snake's pang, whale's spine, shark's fin, odd stones, rooster's spur, guinea bird's horn, bizarre roots, weird herbs, or anything rare or strange or Siamese like a twin-tailed lizard or two-headed snake, or any freak of creation or monstrosity. At least, these are the things attested to as what constitutes the **anting-anting**.

But the fact that Filipinos cannot be definite about its real nature makes this something of an enigma. Yet perhaps this only serves to betray the secrecy of its presence or the mystery of its real nature. Its possessors do not seem to relish bandying their possession of it, and the only conceivable reason for this includes the protection of their person and the preservation of their **anting-anting**'s potency since it is believed that when this is used for vanity or arrogance its power is relinquished.

Other things commonly passed on as **anting-anting** include good luck charms of traders and gamblers, ago-go paraphernalias of hippies and fashion buffs and religious medallions of the pious. Observed Ernesto A. Franco: "Good luck, aside from physical power, is another reason for the pursuit of the **anting-anting**." But in the strict sense of the word, are they really so?

They could not possibly be. The **anting-anting** is not as common as these. It is not something quite easy to be had. It is a rare object and not even a commodity that can be the subject of commerce. **Anting-anting**(s) for sale are definitely not the real McCoy. Its rarity is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that in a generation, as in the last, only one person has been reputed to possess it; or a few, if the little known ones are included.

The manner of the **anting-anting's** acquisition is also the subject of lengthy and protracted debate. Some insist that it can be acquired after defeating in a barehand combat some spiritual giant, while others indicate that it can be achieved by swallowing a crystal drop of water that hangs from a banana heart at a certain time in the dead of night. Others still profess to other means.

Enduring mysteries like the **anting-anting**, according to Franco, serve their purpose, as in their purest form, they shed light on the mental and physical temperament of a people. Its promise of romance seems to be its principal appeal to the poor and disposesssed. To be impervious to bullets, to disappear and reappear at will, and to ward off evil spirits and be protected from danger of any kind – these are what makes it attractive to the poor and dispossessed who cannot enjoy the semblance of such power which money can usher for the simple reason that they do not have it. Thus illusions and make-believe are resorted to. It is, after all, the only way out of their misery. One shouldn't, however, entertain wrong notions or strange ideas about the **anting-anting**. Among its avowed powers does not include providing the winning number of a sweepstakes ticket.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the **anting-anting** is its being associated with religion. Religious medals are being passed on as **anting-anting** to the utter confusion of many. Educator Alejendro Roces tells us about an **anting-anting** he knows, one made of triangular pieces of bronze and embossed with three figures – a cross, a key and a rooster – plus a pig Latin inscription on its back that said **Gallios Petrio Potestates Dabaron Sekolorom** – "St. Peter's

Rooster Gives Power."

To associate the **anting-anting** with religion is somehow ridiculous and absurd. The only thing that these two have in common is their "power to protect its possessor from danger." Aside from this, they travel separate paths toward opposite goals. They cannot , therefore, be associated except by contrast and by a thin bone of contention: that it must only be used for a good purpose. When used for an evil purpose, the **anting-anting's** power will be relinquished. Religion is supposed to be good, while the **anting-anting** (or witchcraft) evil. Obersved Nick Joaquin: " . . . For good and evil have such confusing faces – evil may look good, good may look evil – until even the most sincere Christian may be deceived . . . . "

But the attempt to associate religion with the **anting-anting** is a betrayal of the deep roots it has established in the Filipino consciousness, and the only conceivable reason for this is the fact that the friars found it easier to penetrate into the consciousness of the people through something they already have so much faith in; it was easier to peddle religion that way. It was somehow a psychological solution to their predicament on how to communicate with the people and make the latter accept what they have to offer.

But while the **anting-anting** has been associated with good and illustrious men, it is equally true that there has been various attempts to associate it with bandits. Foremost of these are Santiago Ronquillo, alias Tiagong Akyat, and Leonardo Manecio, better known as Nardong Putik. The latter's **anting-anting** is said to be a pickled foetus. Both hails from Cavite, south of Manila, and are self-styled Robin Hoods.

Any reference to the **anting-anting**, however, easily drags one name into prominence – that of Gregorio Aglipay. His seeming invincibility is believed to be the working of his **anting-anting**.

"Aglipay can be identified with various revolutions and his name can easily go hand-in-hand with Diego Silang and Ricarte in historical prestige. For he figured in the revolution

of 1892 against Spain, resisted the American occupation in the tradition of Ricarte, and afterward founded a revolutionary, independent church now variously known as 'Philippine Independent Church' or 'Aglipayan Church'," noted Quijano de Manila. What Martin Luther was to England, Gregorio Aglipay is to the Philippines.

Perhaps the coincidence that this writer is Aglipay's godson qualifies him for the revelation of factual information about the Aglipayan bishop which are heretofore unchronicled. From my grandfather who was a priest in his church, I gathered that his early morning gurgle constituted not water but vinegar. Reputed as a man of extraordinary strength, one manifestation of Aglipay's strength was in the way he toyed a heavy iron bar like a child toying a pencil, holding one of its tips between thumb and index finger and swaying it.

Aglipay's trips to Bangued, Abra was characterized by lodging in my grandfather's house. His siestas therewereaided by one of grandfather's sons, Agustin, whom he was particularly fond of. The Bishop's back was a strange phenomenon, according to uncle Agustin. Scattered in different places on his back were five flesh corns and about the size of corn grains, too. Pressing one of these would send them all scrambling playfully, taking each other's different places in the manner of children's games.

One morning, according to my grandfather, he and the Bishop started in Narvacan on their way to Vigan. The latter, as usual, rode on his famed castano horse. After galloping ahead and disappearing at a bend, he was seen no more by my grandfather on the way. Hours later, my grandfather reached their destination. On the premise of the house they were going to, Grandfather saw the castano and found it completely relaxed, not a sign of fatigue inhim, while Grandfather's horse was practically bathed in sweat and dead-tired. Upstairs my grand old man saw his superior to be as relaxed as his horse.

Another such incident was their excursion to a stream to bathe a cow. After the ritual, Aglipay told Grandfather to go over the other side of the small hill with the added instruction

that he pull the rope so that the hesitant and stubborn animal would follow. Grandfather was in the process of pulling the animal with all his might when suddenly it feli near him, almost hitting him.

In "For Every Tear, A Victory," a biography of (Philippine) President Ferdinand Marcos, Hartzell Spence wrote: "There was just enough documentation of the talisman's existence to give it credence even among some of the sophisticated. Aglipay himself admitted his possession of it. A dozen live men who, at one time or another, have vouched to newspapermen and even to serious scholars that they have seen the fetish, and have witnessed its powers work. They had known General Aglipay, on a great white Arab horse, to disappear from their camp, to reappear a moment later a half-mile away at the critical sector of the battle. The priest had even used the charm to provide amusement. Several times he had descended from his mountain lair on a Sunday afternoon to mingle with the American soldiers at a village cockfight, knowing that the Americans had a price on his head. When he was recognized and the soldiers rushed at him, he vanished. So the witnesses said . . . . Survivors also testified that once in the mountains Aglipay had fallen mortally ill of pneumonia or malaria, and for twenty-four hours lay dead. Preparatory to burial, his followers searched his pockets, and found the magic charm. They boiled it in a cup of water and poured the liquid down Aglipay's throat. Instantly he revived."

It is said that the anting-anting passed to Pres. Ferdinand Marcos. Opined Franco: "A dying man with an amulet cannot breathe his last until he transfers the magic to someone else." It is described as a " . . . sliver of petrified medicinal wood imbedded in his spine." There's no way, however, of finding out whether this is true or not. But in so many instances where his public rallies are soaked and the rain stops when it's his turn to speak, Marcos saw in this intriguing coincidence an opportunity to jestingly claim that "it's his anting-anting at work." And many are inclined to believe, explaining that coincidences can happen only some of the

times and not all the time. Pressed, however, for a categorical confirmation or denial about the existence of the charm, Marcos just smiles.

That Aglipay had chosen to bestow the **anting-anting** to Marcos, if at all, is bolstered by their relationship: the latter is the former's godson. Marcos doubtless possesses the necessary qualities of a deserving recipient. His brilliance and bravery may not have escaped Aglipay.

An example of how an invaluable heritage is bequeathed is best portrayed by an episode in the life of Alexander the Great. It must be emphasized, however, that it was not an **anting-anting** that the young emperor was trying to bequeath, for he was not reputed to own one, but the throne. Thus, when he was dying, his ministers crowded around him and asked to whom he shall bequeath the throne. And Alexander replied – "To the ablest."

It must be noted that being human, Alexander may also have had his favorite minister whom he could have easily appointed. And yet, he did not chose to bestow the throne gratuitously to such a minister. For if Alexander were human and at that a servant to human weaknesses, he was also rational and a slave to rational values. He, therefore, left the throne to be contested. At least, in this way, the mettle of the one who wins is subjected to a rigid test. And surviving such a rigid test presupposes excellence. The point being driven at here is that the granting is not sparing but discriminatory. Not every Juan, Pedro and Jose can be a recipient. Sometimes, if no one deserved if by the standard of the possessor, the amulet is not passed at all and it's forever lost once he dies.

Is the **anting-anting** myth or real?

One word can probably supply the answer – "faith." A good example is an ailing person who submits for treatment both to a faith-healer who administers no drugs but for whom he has complete faith in and the best doctor available but for whom he does not believe in. It is usually the former who effects a cure. This only goes to show that faith plays an important factor in the effectivity of the **anting-anting**.

But even with the showing that it's not the **anting-anting**

but some mysterious force like faith that makes things happen, this should not relegate the object to a status wherein it must be altogether discarded. For in the final analysis, it serves as the foundation or repository of one's faith. In this role at least, the **anting-anting** serves a noble purpose.

SINAWALI

The influence of the **kali** is nothing short of being extensive. It criss-crossed the country in influencing the various martial systems of the other ethnic groups, majority as well as minority. The most conspicuous of these are the **pagkalikali** of the Ibanags and the **kalirongan** of the Pangasinenses. Note the **kali** in the last two syllables of the first as well as the first two syllables of the second.

We are told that its different versions, aside from the aforecited, among the various ethnic groups includes the **didya** of the Cebuanos, the **escrima** of the Capizeños, the **pananandata** of the Tagalogs, the **pagaradman** of the Ilongos and the **sinawali** of the Pampangos, among others.

There have also been attempts to include into this grouping the **kabaroan** of the Ilocanos but which this writer rejects, if only for the belief that the Ilocano martial system better identifies with the **arnis.**

In the Samtoy dialect, **kabaroan** means "newest" or "latest." As such, under no circumstance would it belong to **kali,** this being considered as the oldest local martial system ever, being already in vogue during the time of Lapu-Lapu. The plausible "latest" influence to the Ilocano martial art is the **arnis.**

A peculiarity is, however, discernible in the Ilocano version of **arnis:** it is in the prop, the stick utilized. Instead of the rattan pole of the genuine **arnis,** the Ilocanos prefer as substitute the so-called **annawan,** a stick of hardwood. No larger significance can be attached to this fact, except that there is a shortage of rattan poles in Ilocandia and the **annawan** is the more accessible material.

Granting, for the sake of argument, but without necessarily conceding, that the aforecited protestations are correct, let it be observed that the parties concerned have introduced tangible innovations and discernible refinements that have de-faced its original form, in which dressing it can truly be said to be all its own.

Take the case of the **sinawali** of the Pampangos. Incidentally, the Pampangos are the citizens of Pampanga, one of the provinces that – together with Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Zambales and Bataan – comprise what is identified as Central Luzon, the so-called Philippines' rice bowl. In history, they have a blackened reputation largely because those who engineered the capture of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo in Palanan, Isabela were the Macabebes.

Sinawali is likewise the name of the bladed weapon utilized in the Pampango martial system: an irregular, snaking outline that resembles an elongated leaf. For want of a name, the weapon's name is often appropriated to refer to a particular martial system. The same thing happens to be true with respect to **sinawali** which comes either short, slightly longer than a standard dagger, or long, in the tradition of the sword. The unique outline of the blade can only be inspired by the example of the arrowhead which, when embedded in the human flesh, is hard to extract. Nowhere in its sanitized form can the **sinawali** be associated with its percursor, the **kali,** except for certain ambiguous aspects.

SILAT

Distinct and independent of the **lagot** is the **silat** whose skills include the **lagot** for hit, **tangkis** for parry and **agaw** for disarm. It should, however, be observed that, in comparison with the aforecited, this one is patently more dangerous, it being the counterpart of fencing. Utilized therein are such weapons as the **kris, kali, barong, kampilan, gunong, laring, banjal, utak, bangkon** and **lahot,** among others. Of these all, the **kris** is the most popular for being widely used, it being also a weapon of common usage in such Asian countries as Indonesia and Malaysia. Incidentally, a poem has romanticized the **kris** as follows:

Recollection cleaves the heart
Like a sharp Sumatran kris.

The **silat** can result in the serious, if not fatal, injury

of a combatant. Due to this, it can be said that it is no sport to be contested by and between friends. It is more in keeping with the truth to believe that it is taken up by combatants who bear a deep-seated grudge against each other and want to settle their differences once and for all.

Of a curious significance to any study of the **silat** is the presence, in Indonesia, of the **pentjak silat** and, in Malaysia, of the **bersilat.** More extensive studies of these martial arts cannot but reveal some kind of an affinity, if not a direct relationship, among them.

That their superior knowledge in martial arts has not been utilized as an instrument of gain and abuse is a tribute to the temperance and sobriety of the Samals, a trend to be emulated. They have not used it for pillaging and piracy, but only in defense of themselves whenever their persons have been occasionally attacked.

The same cannot, however, be said of the Tausogs who have put their advanced knowledge of martial arts to advantage by using it for abuse and arrogance. They have constantly oppressed the Badjaos, maiming and murdering them, pillaging their villages, burning their homes and raping their women, prompting the latter to flee in untold terror. And as there was nowhere to go but to the sea, they sought sanctuary there, eventually establishing permanent settlements. It is definitely an experience that kindled so much hatred among the Badjaos toward the Tausogs.

Available historical data points to three persons – Tubba, Sahudah and Wabulong – as the ones who introduced the **silat** into this country during the latter half of the 19th century. All three belongs to the Celebes tribe known as Bugis. Certain quarters also attribute the introduction of **kuntao** into this country to them, although this is highly disputable.

But they seem to be not really the first, after all. Another member of the Bugis tribe by the name of Samaru, also a master of this deadly martial sport, came much earlier than these three men credited with the introduction of **silat.**

Fate, however, seemed to have conspired to deny him the credit because before he could succeed in teaching and propagating his art, he was murdered. And the motive? For maintaining an illicit liaison with one of Rajah Muda's concubines and someone had to be hired to do the job, someone strong and brave and equally skilled, if not even more so, in the art of martial sport. Let not the fact that Samaru's possession of Byronic features escape us.

LANGKASILAT

A version of the **silat** is conducive to the staging for exhibition, and it is called **langka** which is characterized by graceful dance steps and intricate body movements. Body maneuvers demonstrate the savvy of a performer — in the pivoting and turning at four corners, leaping, evading, swinging the **kris** for the different **lagots**, or hits, and **tangkis**, or parrying. Percussion instruments like the **agong** (large copper gong), **kulintang** and **gabbang** provides the accompanying music, something indispensable to it.

But for all its merits, the **langka** is still considered as a poor substitute for the real **silat** which is locally known as **langkasilat**, in as much as the substance of the real McCoy is not represented. Too dangerous for exhibition purposes, it is never played, only actually fought. Unlike in the **arnis** where the participants are armed merely with sticks, short poles and similar objects, the **langkasilat** con-

testants are equipped with bladed weapons wherein their swinging at each other carries the inherent danger of getting fatally hit.

One noticeable feature of the **langkasilat** is the resemblance of its graceful and striking movements to the **pandalaga** or **muestracion** of **arnis**. Any student desirous of learning the art invariably goes through the fundamentals, among which includes the art of graceful walking (akin to the walking on rice paper exercise of **kung fu**, if it may be pointed out), leaping, balancing on a single foot and swinging of the forearms in a fan-like manner. The **lagot** (the art of hitting) and the **tangkis** (evading or parrying blows) constitutes the subsequent lessons therein.

Another connotation of the term **langka** has something to do with the artistic exercises involving body movements. They subscribe to a number of combinations whose difficultness increases gradually. These includes **lagnka satu, langka dua, langka tiga, langka ampat, langka lima, langka anum, langka pitu, langka lapan, langka sambilan, langka sapulu, langka sablas** and **langka duablas**, or arts one to twelve – in that order.

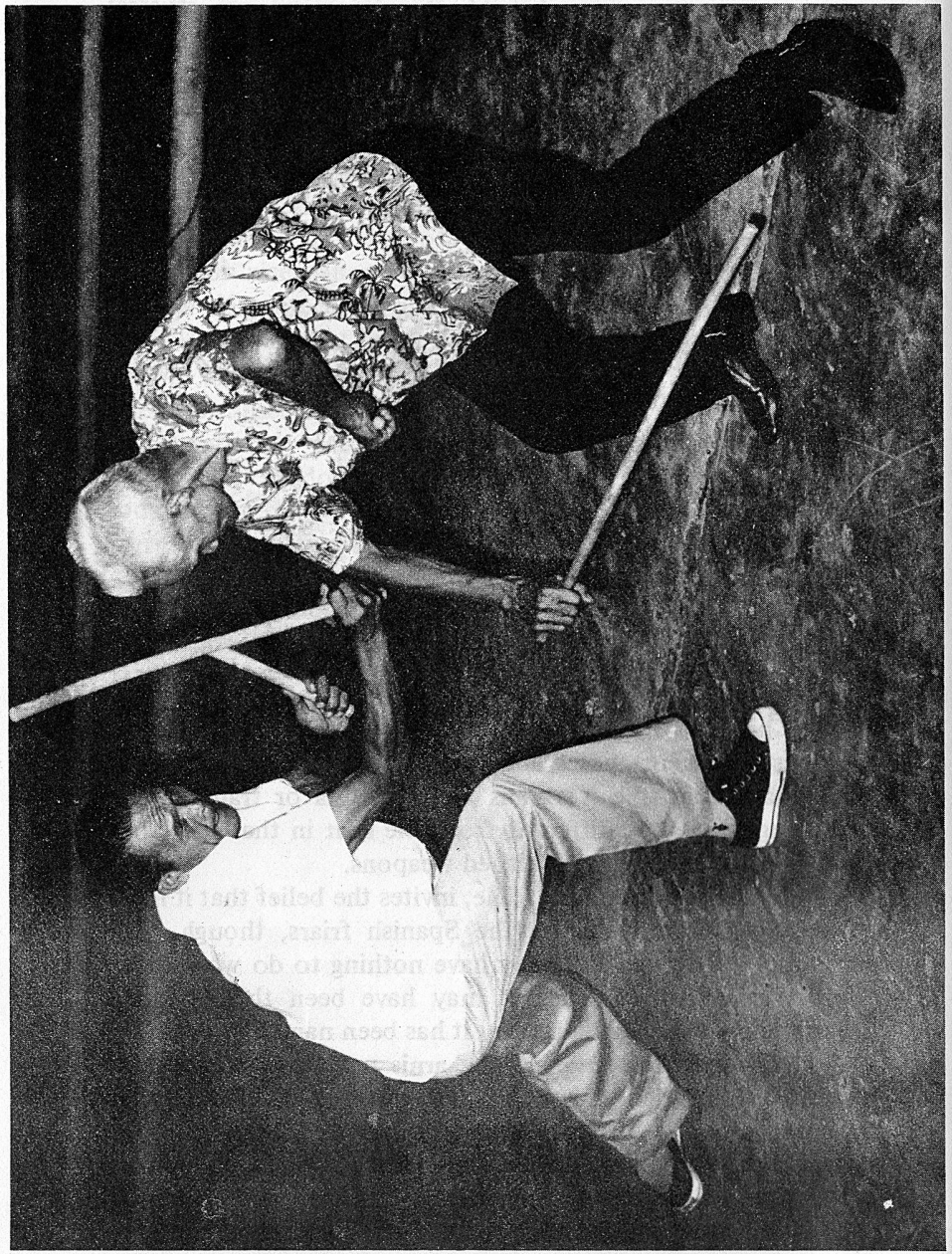
Mastery of the ultimate **langka** bestows the practitioner a **silat** rating equivalent to judo's tenth dan.

ARNIS

The **arnis** may be defined as ". . . the art of fighting with sticks, short poles and the like." Variously known as **escrima** among the Visayans and **estocada** or **fraile** among the Tagalogs, it is different from the **silat** in that the latter is the art of fighting with bladed weapons.

Its alternative name, **fraile**, invites the belief that it must have been introduced by the Spanish friars, though erroneously it may be. For they have nothing to do whatsoever with its invention. That it may have been their favorite pastime probably explains why it has been named as such.

Although the **kali** and the **arnis** may have so much in common between themselves, it cannot be denied that certain aspects differentiate one from the other. For instance, the **kali** is an offense-and-defense sport which makes use of the **sibat** (spear) and **kalasag** (shield), while the **arnis** relies on nothing for shield but the graceful yet precise



art of evading blows by side-stepping or backtracking as well as moving to the right or the left, as the situation demands, not to mention parrying with one's pole.

There have been pernicious attempts to debunk the indigenous inception of the **arnis** by attributing Occidental origin with the citing of its similarity with the Irish staff play as well as the English sword and dagger fencing.

Between two systems which boasts of an Oriental and Occidental feature, should the latter always prevail? Is there never anything Oriental of origin? Hadn't the gunpowder and the blowgun been of Eastern discovery, until the Western man brought them home to fashion the cannon, if only to subdue the very same source from which they obtained them?

In a manner of speaking, this fact focusses a glaring defect of the Orientals: they are content with nurturing their leisurely instincts by making firecrackers to enhance their festivities, among these being the advent of the New Year and the celebration of town fiestas, out of the resources within their disposal instead of devising more constructive usages out of it.

Staunch proponents of the opposite view – that is, the Oriental origin of the arnis – cite its resemblance with Indonesia's **chakalele**, Japan's **kendo**, China's staff fencing and Polynesia's **talaha**. But for all one may know, these similarities may just be coincidental. Exposure to these cultures have not been registered until lately, so how could any influence, if ever, set in?

The origin of the **arnis** is lost in obscurity in spite of its recentness, it being known to have sprouted in the late eighteenth century. No one, not even those who present themselves as its masters, can lay claim to authoritative knowledge as to its real origin. Certainly, the corresponding theories bandied about do not carry the weight of authority. As such, they should, therefore, be dismissed and rejected with impunity. Thus, its origin can, at best, only be more a matter of conjecture; at worst, a downright misrepresentation.

Be that as it may, it would do no harm to examine

them. Certain quarters advance that this premier Filipino martial arts originated from the word **arnis**, a term that refers to the props in Moro-Moro plays. Others, however, explain that due to the incontrovertible resemblance of some of its features with the **kali**, it could only evolve from the latter.

Let it, however, be observed that the latter view meets with extreme difficulty at acceptance, if only because of the absence of evidence that boasts of a possible relation between the two. **Kali** is of the South, while **arnis** is of Luzon and to paraphrase Kipling's famous lines . . .

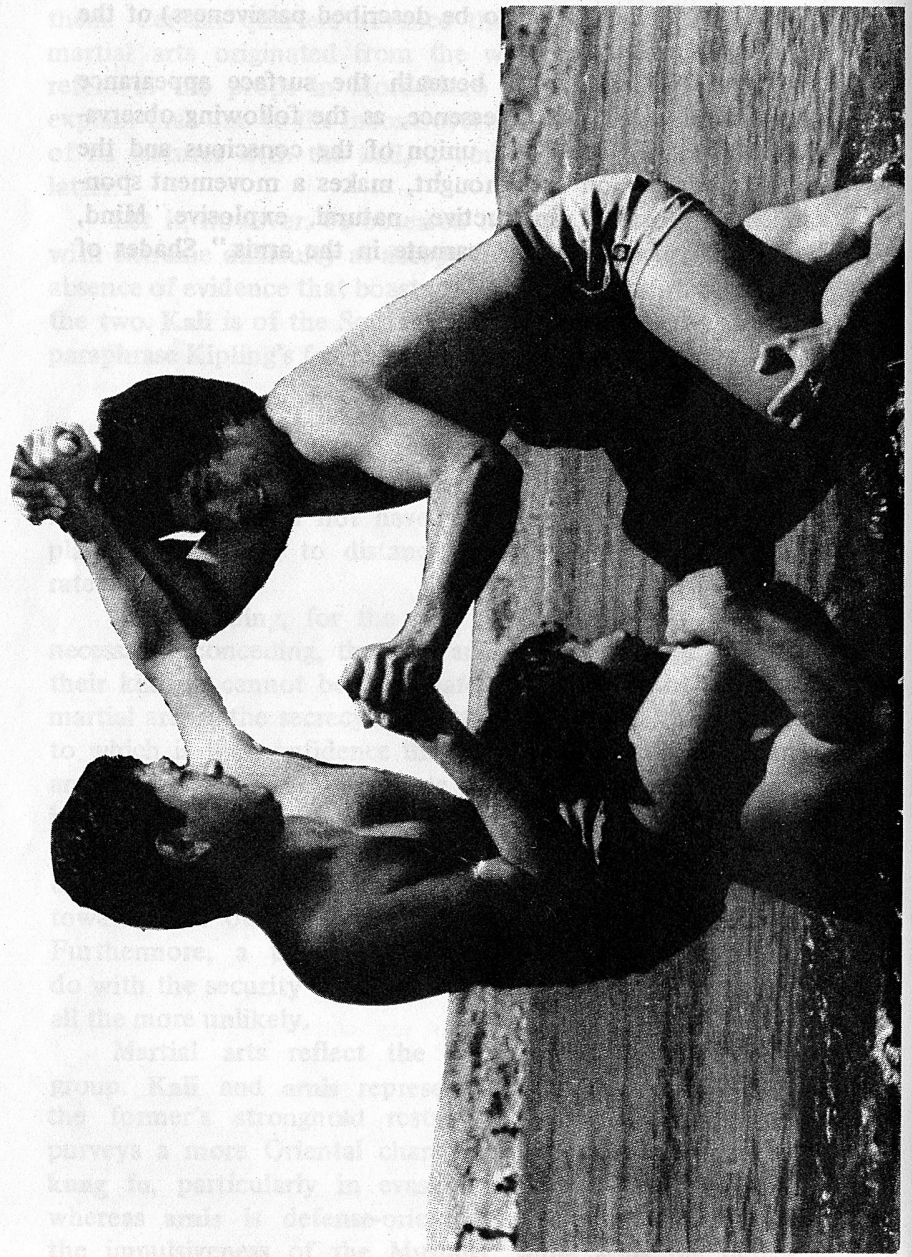
South is South
Luzon is Luzon
And the twain never met.

Indeed, it can be surmised that **kali** and **arnis** never met. As such, one could not have sired the other. In the first place, in addition to distance, a considerable time separates them.

But assuming, for the sake of argument, but without necessarily conceding, that **kali** and **arnis** crossed paths, still their kinship cannot be vouchsafed. A well-known tenet in martial arts is the secrecy that attends its teaching, corollary to which is the confidence that must exist between teacher and student, making the whole ritual entirely selective. As **kali** is identified with the Muslims and **arnis** with the Christians – two entities that, like the negative and positive poles of a veritable magnet, repel each other – their gravitation toward each other is more wishful thinking than factual. Furthermore, a thing like **kali**, which has something to do with the security of an ethnic group, makes the equation all the more unlikely.

Martial arts reflect the temperament of an ethnic group. **Kali** and **arnis** represents diverse concepts. While the former's stronghold rests on the shield, the latter purveys a more Oriental character, it being more akin to **kung fu**, particularly in evasion. **Kali** is offense-oriented, whereas **arnis** is defense-oriented. As such, **kali** reflects the impulsiveness of the Muslims, while **arnis** the defensiveness (it doesn't have to be described passiveness) of the inhabitants of Luzon.

It would seem that beneath the surface appearance of the **arnis** is a spiritual essence, as the following observation portends: "The total union of the conscious and the unconscious, action and thought, makes a movement spontaneous, effortless, instructive, natural, explosive. Mind, body and spirit as one, incarnate in the arnis." Shades of **kung fu!**



ETHNIC WRESTLING

That wrestling is not quite uncommon among the various ethnic groups, minority as well as majority, is perhaps best evidenced by the presence of a counterpart term for it in their respective vocabularies. To the Tagalogs, it is **buno**; the Ilocanos **gabbo**; the Cebuanos **layug**; the Bicolanos **lampugan**; the Pampango **pantok**; the Pangasinenses **balsakan**; the Panayenos **dumong**; the Ifugaos **bultong**; the Samals **silaga**; the Igorots **dama**; the Ibanags **garog**; the Manobos **buteng** or **indeg**; the Dumagats **purgos** or **yapus**; and the Maranaws **kapulubod**, among others.

Enumerating them in this manner – as a whole, that is – cannot but subscribe to a pitfall, which is thinking of them in capsules and believing them to be one and the same, the only difference being a matter of vocabulary and semantics.

Not so; though; for their substance reflects dissimilari-

ues that constitute a variety, a veritable hodge-podge, as a more detailed treatment of them will attest.

SILAGA

The Samals are closely associated with two other Muslim tribes, the Tausogs and the Badjaos, though more of a hostile nature than friendly. As such, the principal basis of the association, more than any other consideration, is the geographical reality of their being neighbors.

The Samals boasts of various martial arts, one of which is the **kuntao** which some likens to karate. Others even go to the extent of claiming that it is the sire of karate, something that cannot but be branded as ridiculous and absurd, knowing as we do the latter's actual origin.

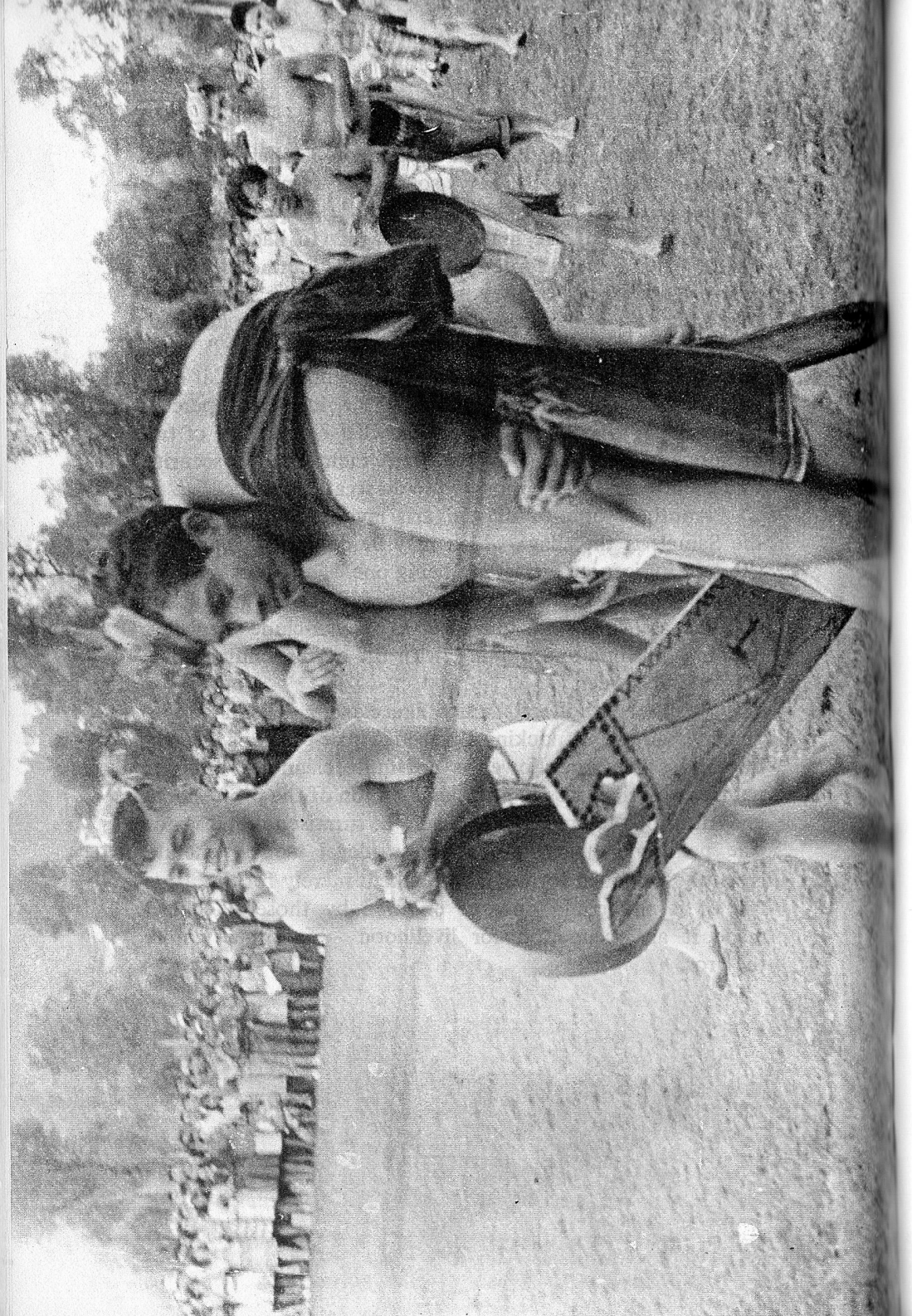
Introduced from Celebes by the Bugis nomads, **kuntao** reached the shores of Southern Philippines during the pre-Spanish times and easily caught fire among the Samals and the Tausogs. Anything that demonstrates how one can outfight as much as five foes cannot but catch fire, and fast at that.

Like karate, **kuntao** is a system of barehand combat. Various skills to which it lays sole claim to includes **suntok** (to box), **hiyak** (throw), **silaga** (wrestle), **sipa** (kick) and **siko** (elbow), but the main one is **lagot** (to hack with the hand). When it was adopted by the Samals, **kuntao** must have evolved into **lagot,** for they are not one and the same. While they may have striking similarities, they are actually different entities. **Lagot** may be termed as "karate, Samal-style."

Martial arts was taught among the Samal youths, if only to cultivate fortitude among them. The elders were perceptive enough to know that such knowledge would be of tremendous value in times of war, and their sense of security told them that it was opportune to do so at the time.

Another form of martial arts invariably attributed to the Samals is the **silaga** which may be described as nothing short of indigenous, wrestling being one of the most natural acts of man. As natural, perhaps, as walking or running. Its features are somewhat universal, as they include throwing, tripping, pushing and pinning, with the corresponding holds thrown in-between.

Whether the illegal tactics like clawing, pinching, eye-gouging, elbowing, kicking, knee-ing, nose-pinching, strangling and others are allowed is not quite clear. But since its nature subscribes less to the classification of the professional and more of the amateur, it should be surmised that it is not The pain and suffering that these illegal tactics generate is simply too much for those who take it merely for the fun of it and could only be endured by those who have made it an occupation for livelihood – in other words, the pros.



BULTONG

That the Ifugaos can boast of their own martial art runs true-to-form, for they possess a reputation for pugilistic temperament. It is an indigenous version of wrestling, the so-called **bultong.**

Let it be observed that the other ethnic groups have their own respective version of wrestling. The Tagalog counterpart of it is **buno,** the Cebuano **layug,** the Pampango **pantok,** the Pangasinense **tulot,** the Panayeno **dumog,** the Ilocano **gabbo,** the Bicolano **lampugan** and the Maranaw **kapulubod,** among others.

The **bultong** does not have the sophistication of its alien counterparts such as the Graeco-Roman, Lancashire, Cumberland and Wesmorland, Cornish, Devonshire, Sumo, etc., as, instead of mats, it is played outdoors—on the grass or dirt.

A **bultong** match is always preceded by a **canao,** a rite wherein the blessings of the deities are solicited. This ritual

consists of sacrificing an animal, be it pig, chicken or carabao.

It need not be stressed what requirement is imposed with respect to attire since this tribe is scantily clad, anyway. For the most part, the lower portion of the body has only G-strings.

Strength has always fascinated the Ifugaos in whatever manner they see it, whether in deer fights, in tribal battles, in tug-of-wars or anywhere at all. Wrestling being a manifestation of strength, it cannot but fail to capture their imagination.

The objective of the **bultong,** as with the other forms of wrestling, is to throw the opponent to the ground. In the process of a match, there may be elbowing, boxing, scratching, eye-gouging, nose-pinching, moustache-pulling, hair-pulling, rib-tickling and other unfair tactics that cannot be avoided, wrestling being what it is: a game that has no room for niceties. Once a contestant's back is pinned to the ground, the contest is declared over and the combatant atop wins.

Its motivation, which is mainly arbitrary in character, is what makes the Ifugao version of wrestling distinctive (from those of the other ethnic groups, that is). It is resorted to as a means of settling disputes involving adultery as well as land boundary conflicts. The most intriguing aspect of it rests in the fact that a proxy is allowed in the contest, which means that the party directly involved may let another represent him. The comic part of it all is the fact that lawyers are traditinally chosen as proxies: they fight for a client. In view of this feature of the **bultong,** it goes without saying that anybody who ambitions to become a lawyer in Ifugaolandia must not only study the customs, traditions, moores and other matters that forms into their laws but more, to be adept at wrestling. It seems to be an integral part of the legal profession, Ifugao-style. To be able to win cases for one's clients, a lawyer must excel in wrestling matches.

In a boundary dispute, the loser—the landowner this time, not the layers—is subjected to the singular humilation of

being carried over to the winning contestant's property and thrown there.

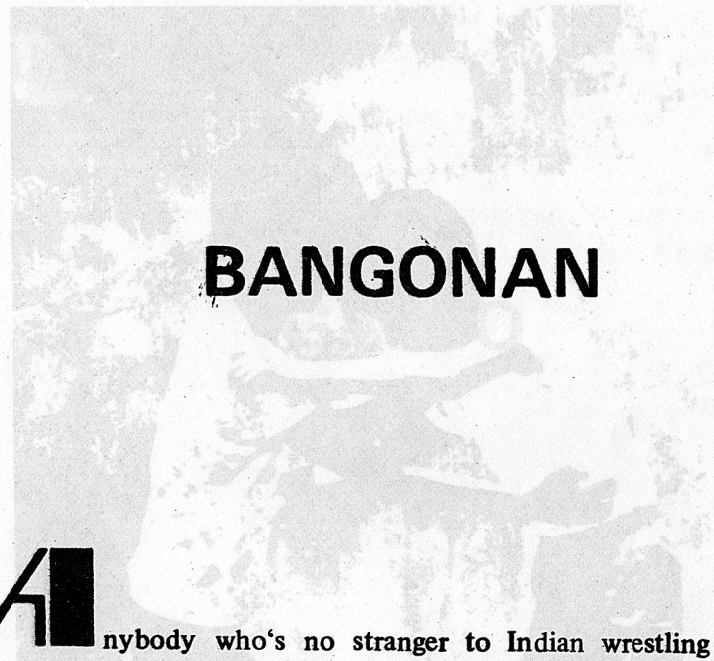
DAMA

The so-called **dama** is the Igorot counterpart of wrestling.

The common venue of such contests are the rivershores where a holiday crowd usually gathers since the **dama's** avowed purpose is to enliven festivals. Where present-day wrestling bouts are held on a matted ring, not the Igorot version which is likewise matted in the sense that the ground on which the combatants grapple is lined with hay.

So also are they devoid of kimono uniforms like their more civilized counterparts, G-strings being all that the combatants have on their bodies.

The prize for such exhibitions come in the form of bundled sheaves of rice.



BANGONAN

Anybody who's no stranger to Indian wrestling will readily know that the so-called **bangonan** is the Ifugao version of it.

It is not being implied, however, that one may have originated from the other, muchless the latter from the former. What is merely being pointed out is the conspicuous similarity of the two systems beyond which there seems to be no conceivable way of interaction between the two peoples, they being of considerable distance. India is so far away. To associate the two is stretching the imagination farther than necessary.

The **bangonan** is played by the contestants lying side by side on oppostie directions, with their backs on the ground and their upper legs hooked against each other. In such position is the game's objective accomplished – an effort on the part of one to throw the opponent off.

By all means must the **bangonan** be described as more a test of strength than of skill.

GABBO

The Ilocanos, an ethnic group from the northern region of the Philippines, have their own indigenous form of wrestling which they call **gabbo.** Its patent crudeness as well as the non-exposure of the Ilocanos to foreign martial sports, either actually or through the written word, cannot but strengthen the gabbo's claim to indigeneity.

The **gabbo** does not seem to have the sophistication of certain foreign forms of wrestling such as the Graeco-Roman, Lancashire, Cornish, Cumberland and Wesmorland, Sumo and others. And neither the unique, if outlandish, character of the indigenous martial arts like the **arnis, estocada, kali,** etc.

Only two features characterize the **gabbo.** One, the fundamental hold which is placing their arms around each other's body, their hands joined in the middle of the adversary's back, and in this same position, pursue the objective: to throw the opponent to the ground. Two and lastly, but

in no case the least—tripping.

Never meant for exhibition, children usually practice it while playing on riverbanks or in grassy places like the fields or meadows.

If these things prove anything, it is the fact that wrestling is a universal sport. It could not have originated in any single place.

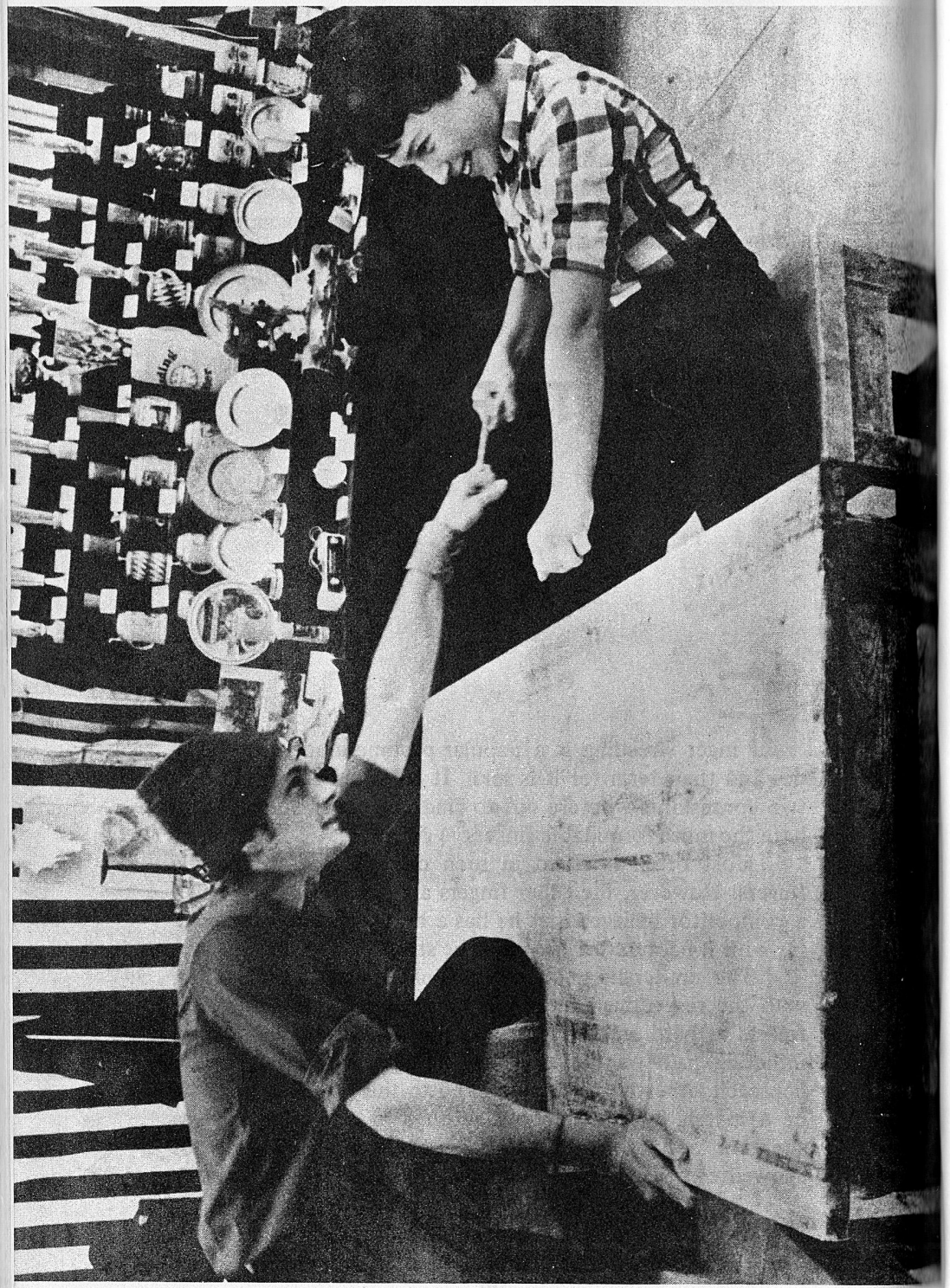
Or better still, any single nation cannot have an exclusive claim over it.

TORSI

Finger wrestling is a popular pastime among the Ilocanos and their term for it is **torsi.** It is played atop a table by two contestants who are out to find out who between them have the more formidable fingers.

Most often involved in such contests are the middle fingers. However, the other fingers are resorted to whenever a competitor believes that he has a better chance of prevailing with it because it happens to be stronger.

The contending fingers are linked against each other, with the respective contestants pressing and tightening their fingers as hard as their strength allows, with a view toward inflicting pain on the adversary's finger. Then they try to lick each other by tilting the hand to the left side, unless it be a match by and between southpaws where a vice-versa situation occurs. In the process, the contestants are not allowed to raise their elbows from the table's deck, as such



invariably aids them and constitutes cheating. The referee, if there be any, sees to it that the contestants' elbows remain touching the table's deck throughout the duration of the match. Whoever succeeds in tilting the interlocked fingers to his side wins.

Handicaps are a feature of **torsi** under extraordinary circumstances, as when any other finger is pitted against the middle finger which is admittedly the strongest. That no bets are involved in **torsi** matches speaks well of the game.

Finger wrestling is basically a test of strength. Whether there is any kind of skill that can offset strength in this particular contest has yet to be recognized.

Finger wrestling seems not to be unknown among the other ethnic groups, be it majority or minority, and this is nowhere more evident than in the presence of a counterpart term in their respective vocabularies—**pantok** to the Pampangos, **gangi** to the Cebuanos, **tornillo** to the Ilongos, **sumping** to the Tagalogs, **bungkalan** to the Bicolanos, **kawet** to the Pangasinenses and **kalida** to the Maranaws, among others.

The Germans as well as the peoples of the Scandinavian countries, particularly those in Amsterdam, have their own version of finger wrestling. But theirs subscribes to a difference and is more of a finger-pulling match. Metal links are used to join the contestants' fingers which are atop a narrow table. They then pull each other to their respective sides. Theirs is more sadistic because it often happens that the fingers are injured and bloodied. The most that the **torsi** can do by way of violence or injury is the spurting of blood at the fingertip. But this rarely happens.

One thing more, body weight plays an important role in the Scandinavian version of the contest since they pull with all the weight they can muster in their physical frame.

Finger wrestling in Europe is commemorated by an annual championship contest. No such contest is stage hereabouts.

TURHI

Finger-wrestling, Ifugao-style, is termed **turhi** and variously called, in Ilocano, **torsi**; in Tagalog, **sumping**; in Pangasinense, **kawet**; in Ilongo, **tornillo**; in Cebuano, **gangi**; in Pampango, **pantok**; in Bicolano, **bungkalan**; in Ibanag, **tosi**; in Igorot, **tolsi**; and in Maranaw, **kalida.**

The middle fingers of the respective contestants interlock, in which position effort is made by one another to tilt it in his favor. To succeed as such is to prevail.

There's something that more than meets the eye in the manner that the Ifugaos take to finger wrestling. More than just a wholesome game of strength, it serves as a so-called "benefit of the doubt satisfier."

Until its winner submit himself to a **turhi** duel and win it, feats of prevailing at other wrestling contests such as the **bangonan** and **bultong** do not become decisive. In this sense could it be said that martial arts contests among the

Ifugaos are, to hazard a similarity in the Olympics, a veritable decathlon.

SANGGOL

The Ilocano term for arm wrestling is **sanggol** and its different ethnic counterparts include **bunong braso** to the Tagalogs, **boo** to the Cebuanos, **sangkol** to the Igorots, **hanggor** to the Ifugaos, among others.

Like the **torsi,** it is played atop a table, with the contestants crossing their wrists, in which position they try to tilt each other's hands. To prevent any undue advantage or cheating, the elbow has to be glued to the table's deck for the duration of the contest.

Let it be observed that under ordinary circumstances, the hand is pitted against its kind, meaning the right against the opponent's right and the left versus the adversary's left. It is one contest which, much as one party may want to, in no way allows the concession of a handicap. A vice-versa situation – meaning a left hand against the opponent's right or the other way around – cannot occur. Preventing this is

the fact that the direction of the hand's force is always towards a hand's front and never otherwise.

The **sanggol** is principally a test of strength, the gift of which has always been not merely a decided advantage but likewise a cause of vanity. It is one instance where there is no known form of skill that can overcome it.

Strength and skill have always been a classic conflict that nonetheless inspired the polarization of opinion. Certain quarters swear by the former god, while some people abide by the latter. The dispute has never been resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned, as in the contests where a direct confrontation between the two occurs, some favors one while others side with the second.

In Ilocandia, a **tagnawa,** especially during breaks from it, is always an opportune occasion to a **sanggol's** holding.

HANGGOR

The so-called **hanggor** happens to be the credential that qualifies the Ifugaos to join the league of the various ethnic groups, majority as well as minority, who take to arm wrestling. It is known to them by different names – to the Ilocanos **sanggol,** the Tagalogs **bunong braso,** the Cebuanos **boo** and the Igorots **sangkol,** among others.

The feature that makes the **hanggor** a departure from the classic model has something to do with the posture of the contestants. Where the classic model is played atop a table, with the contestants' elvows resting over the board, not the Ifugaos who are at it on a squatting position, their elbows resting upon their respective knees, while their uncommitted hands push each other's knees for support.

Thus would the contestants outdo each other by way of skill and strength.

LAWIDAN

To attribute a martial art to the Mangyans may sound incredible, coming as it does from a tribe reputed for non-agressiveness. At no time in their uneventful annals have they been engaged in headhunting as do the Ilongots and the Bontocs in the north or other forms of hostilities as do the irreverent tribes elsewhere in the south. For if they are really aggressive, they would not have been driven from the lowlands of Mindoro which they formerly occupied. But as they are not, they have to flee to the mountains where they eventually established permanent settlements.

The Mangyan martial art is the so-called **lawidan,** a form of wrestling. Self-preservation must have been the motivating factor behind its formulation. Self-preservation, after all, is a primordial instinct.

That wrestling is not quite uncommon among the different ethnic groups is best evidenced by the presence of a coun-

terpart term for it in their respective vocabularies. To the Tagalogs it is **buno,** the Cebuanos **layug,** the Pangasinenses **balsakan,** the Panayenos **dumog,** the Pampangos **pantok,** the Bicolanos **lampugan,** the Ilocanos **gabbo** and the Maranaws **kapulubod,** among others.

Be that as it may, these are not different in name merely but one and the same in substance. The **lawidan** subscribes to a distinction, its main feature being tripping. Not quite dissimilar to the Lancashire of alien vintage, if it may be said so.

In the same vein should the **lawidan** be not confused with the Tagalog **sikaran** for even as both make use of the legs as the principal weapon of aggression, the former confines exclusively to tripping, while the latter to kicking.

PAG BETTEH

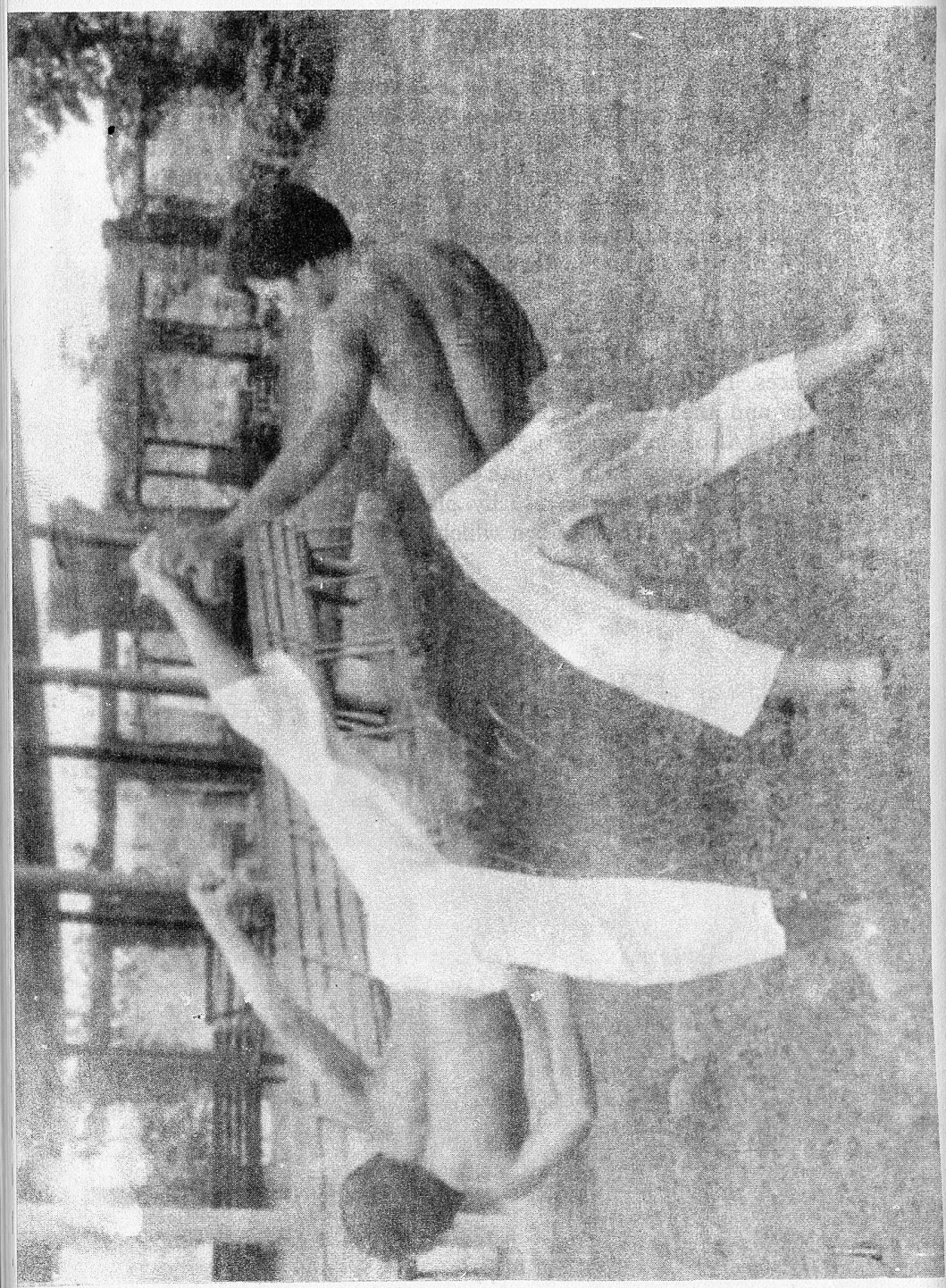
The Badjaos are reputed to be the sea gypsies simply because they have chosen to make the sea as their permanent domain. They used to dwell on land, but the hostility of rival tribes such as the Tausogs and the Samals (but mostly the former) drove them to seek sanctuary in the sea. Reciprocally, they abhor their tormentors and have an unflattering name for them, **lutao.** Some scholars connote this term with "ghost" but this writer prefers to associate it with "obnoxious people."

It should be stated that the sea had been kind to them, as it nurtured them. But somehow the more correct term is that they made every effort to adjust to their new environment. Their communities are clusters of houseboats off Zamboanga. But it is in Sitangkai where the concentration is heaviest and as such, it is considered as their principal domain or roots.

Regarded, as they are, as a peaceful tribe, preferring to shy away from battle rather than fling into it, they nevertheless boast of a form of martial art in the so-called **pag betteh**, wherein a number of boys mix it up with their counterpart-opponents with the objective of tripping them to the ground. In other words, much legwork is required, a feature which unmistakably defines it as leg wrestling and places it in league with the **lawidan** of the Mangyans and the **sikaran** of the Tagalogs.

Be that as it may, they are not without certain differences. The Badjao version is a team effort, while the Mangyan and the Tagalog counterpart is basically an individual affair. Also, the former is a kid game, while the latter are equally participated in by both boys and adults.

The **pag betteh** is usually played on sandbars. In the Badjao martial art, the team which registers the most number of falls triumphs.



SIKARAN

Sikaran and **sipa** are both Tagalog terms for "kick," but with a notable difference: the former is a noun, while the latter is a verb. Deriving from **sikad, sikaran** came to be known as an indigenous martial sport in the tradition of **arnis, kali, silat, bultong, gabbo,** etc. Its nearest similarity, if it may be called that, is with Thai boxing. Even so, they cannot be classified as one and the same. A noticeable difference may be noted in the fact that in the latter, the hands as well as the feet are tolerated to be used as weapons of aggression.

Most martial sports, like karate, makes use of the hands. **Sikaran,** on the other hand, utilizes only the feet. As a rule, and this is what makes it distinct, the hands are never availed of in the **sikaran.** If they are utilized at all, it's only for defense – for catching or parrying blows and never for anything else. Violation of this injunction, es-

pecially in tournaments, is a ground for disqualification.

The rationale behind kick-fighting has something to do with the role of the feet whose significance has yet to be fully appreciated. It is the largest part of the body, aside from the fact that it nurtures the largest bone as well as the most massive muscle.

Sikaran is, comparatively speaking, a new art. It's not as old as, say, **kali, silat** or even **arnis,** not to mention the art forms of martial sports that flourished in the South as well as those practiced by the other tribes.

Sikaran's inception has been placed at around 1900, a pastime of the Baras (Rizal) farmers whose wont had been to kick one another before going to work in the fields. Doing it constantly made them develop skills that would eventually be marked by effectiveness such that other martial arts could hardly compare, or so claims its most ardent exponent. Of the practitioners, some went on to discover certain skills in combat that made them deserve the honor of being called masters. These are no longer around, as most of them have succumbed, their secrets interred with their remains and never imparted, having chosen to keep it to themselves and not to teach it to anyone else. Indeed, secrecy is the essence of martial arts and this is true in any system, especially the Shaolin which until now remains a matter of conjecture. It will be recalled that in the **bothoan,** the ancient school of martial arts hereabouts, premium is placed on secrecy.

A **sikaran** session commences with the drawing of a circle on the ground. The acknowledged talent of the lot, by reason of his superior skill, is often obliged to concede a handicap, thus he positions himself inside the circle and trade kicking talents with the one who stays at the circle's rim. The objective is for the combatant outside to dislodge the contestant within. The rules are really that simple.

In the case of the vain, he would agree to a number of opponents who form a circle. Should the man within be driven out of the circle, it significes defeat and, correspondingly, humiliation.

If the game's continuation be opted, another pretender takes the place of the dislodged practitioner and the same procedure is repeated.

Once in a while, and this seems unavoidable, a session witnesses a mischief-prone contestant who makes it a point to step on a carabao dung prior to a competition, if only to dirty the opponent.

The classic kick is executed by pivoting to the back in a full or complete turnabout manner. The degree of effectiveness subscribes to two classifications: **panghilo** (paralayzing blow) and **pamatay,** or lethal kick. Obviously, the first is aimed at less vital parts of the physique, while the target of the second includes the heart, neck, head, groin and spine, all highly vulnerable parts. Such contingency, however, has been minimized, if not entirely eliminated, in official tournaments where it has been required of the combatants to wear protective devices.

If kung fu has its various styles of fighting in the praying mantis, white crane, tiger claw and monkey axe, among others, so does the **sikaran** have its own share of kicking styles in the **biakid** (similar to the karate reverse roundhouse), **padamba** (jumping front kick), **pilatik** (front snap kick) and **tuhod** (knee blow). The most conspicuous **sikaran** techniques are identified as **pilatak-rap** (front kick), **pilatik lid** (side kick), **pilatik-kod** (back kick), **pilatik-kot** roundhouse kick) and **pilatik-pad** (flying kick). Of these all, the **pilatik-kot,** according to the masters, seems to be the most formidable to parry.

The entry of **sikaran** in tournaments, particularly those of international calibre, presaged certain modifications, if innovations, of its original rules. Like the setting of a time limit of, say, three minutes per round, with, as in boxing, a minute of respite in-between rounds, during which time the contestant, if it is badly hurt, may be nursed by its seconds.

In its original form, no time limit is observed. Combatants call for a time out if they become so exhausted as to be unable to go on some more or when they have had

enough.

Another noticeable innovation has something to do with the creation of a team. Not more than six may play at any one time. As in one-on-one matches, the **llamado** team stays inside the circle.

Likewise evident is the widening of the fighting area into twice the size required of individual matches. In **sikaran** team play, a combatant may be free to select an opponent of his choice, thus he may shift from one to another. The circle certainly limits to a large extent a champion's movement.

The Baras-originated method of foot-fighting entertains no discriminations regarding sex: both male and female may indulge in it, should they so wish.

Sikaran finds a no more vigorous exponent than in Col. Meliton Geronimo who has gone to the extent of organizing clubs for the purpose of teaching the art to anybody who would care to learn it as well as to spread its popularity. His attachment to **sikaran** is understandable. Baras is the venue of his childhood. It is still a popular sport there to this day, especially among the old folks.

"To really appreciate **sikaran's** artistry," Geronimo said, "you should see the masters."

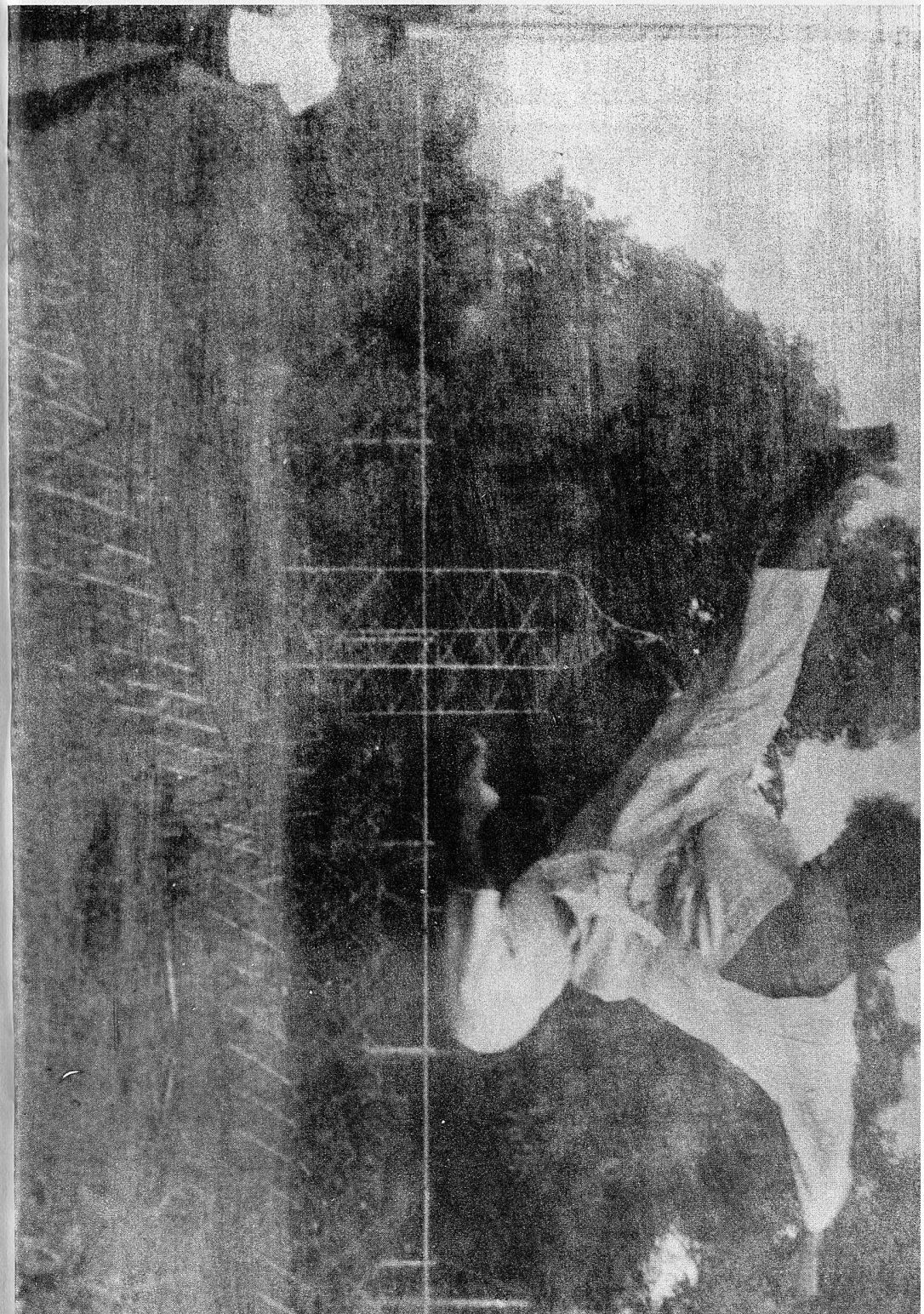
They have a vernacular name for a master, **hari,** whose equivalent is perhaps judo's 10th dan holder. One such **hari** was Perfecto Ballesteros, alias Agila (for his impressive agility), acknowledged as the foremost **padamba** (jumping front kick) exponent. That he could leap as high as ten feet is definitely a testimony to an awesome power.

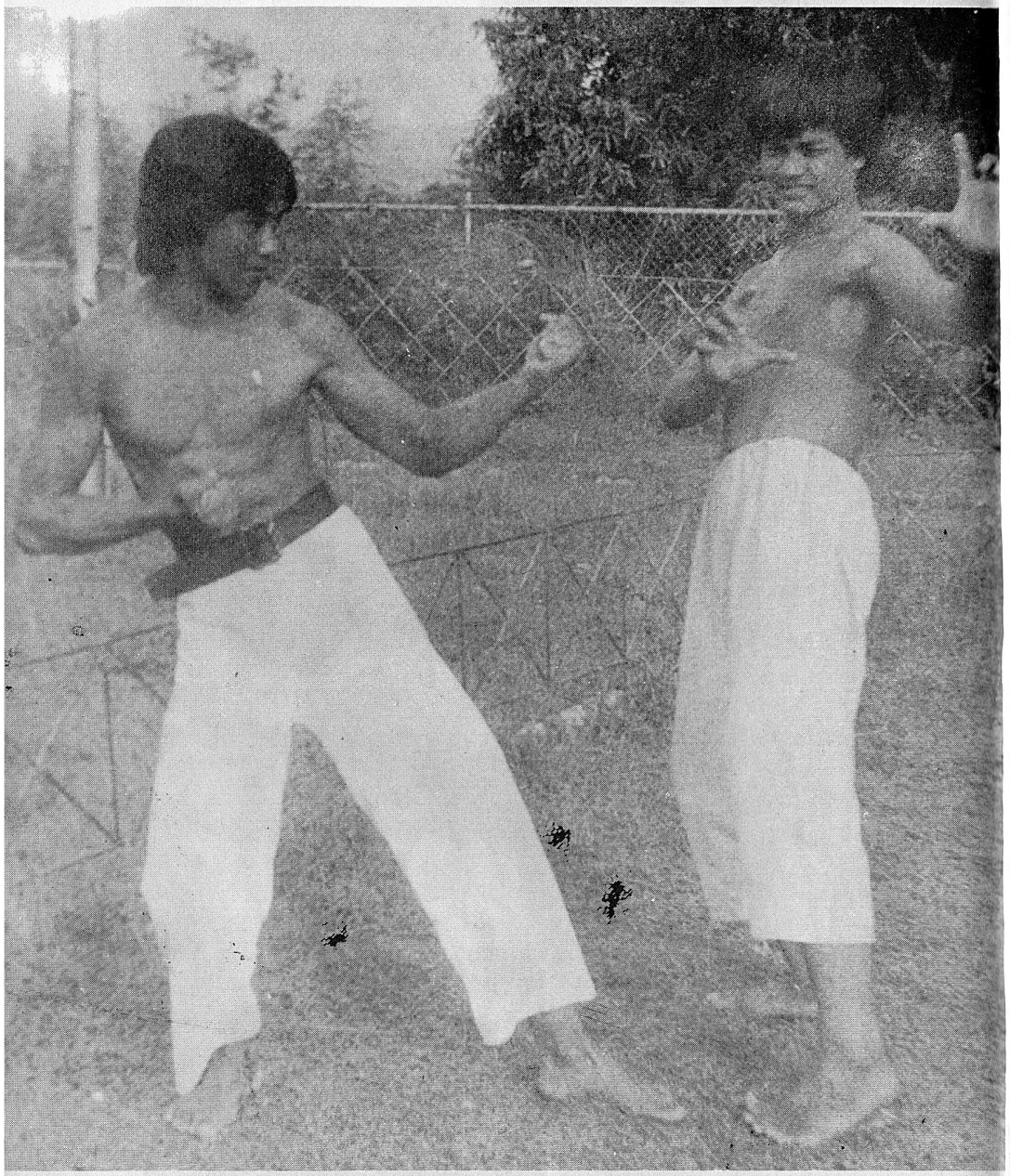
So also was Alfonso Tesoro classified as **hari,** a fellow reputed to crack husked coconuts with his steel-like shins.

Hari Pedro Castañeda, on the other hand, boasts of the singular reputation of killing a carabao with a single **biakid.**

Not until 1961 did **sikaran** make an international debut, and this was made possible when the organization committed to its promotion and propagation, Kapatiran, got affiliated with the Asian Karate Association.

In the first Asian karate championships held in Japan





three years later, **sikaran's** benefactor and/or exponent, Col. Geronimo, bagged the Most Courageous Fighter award, not to mention the plum for being the contestant with the best fighting ability.

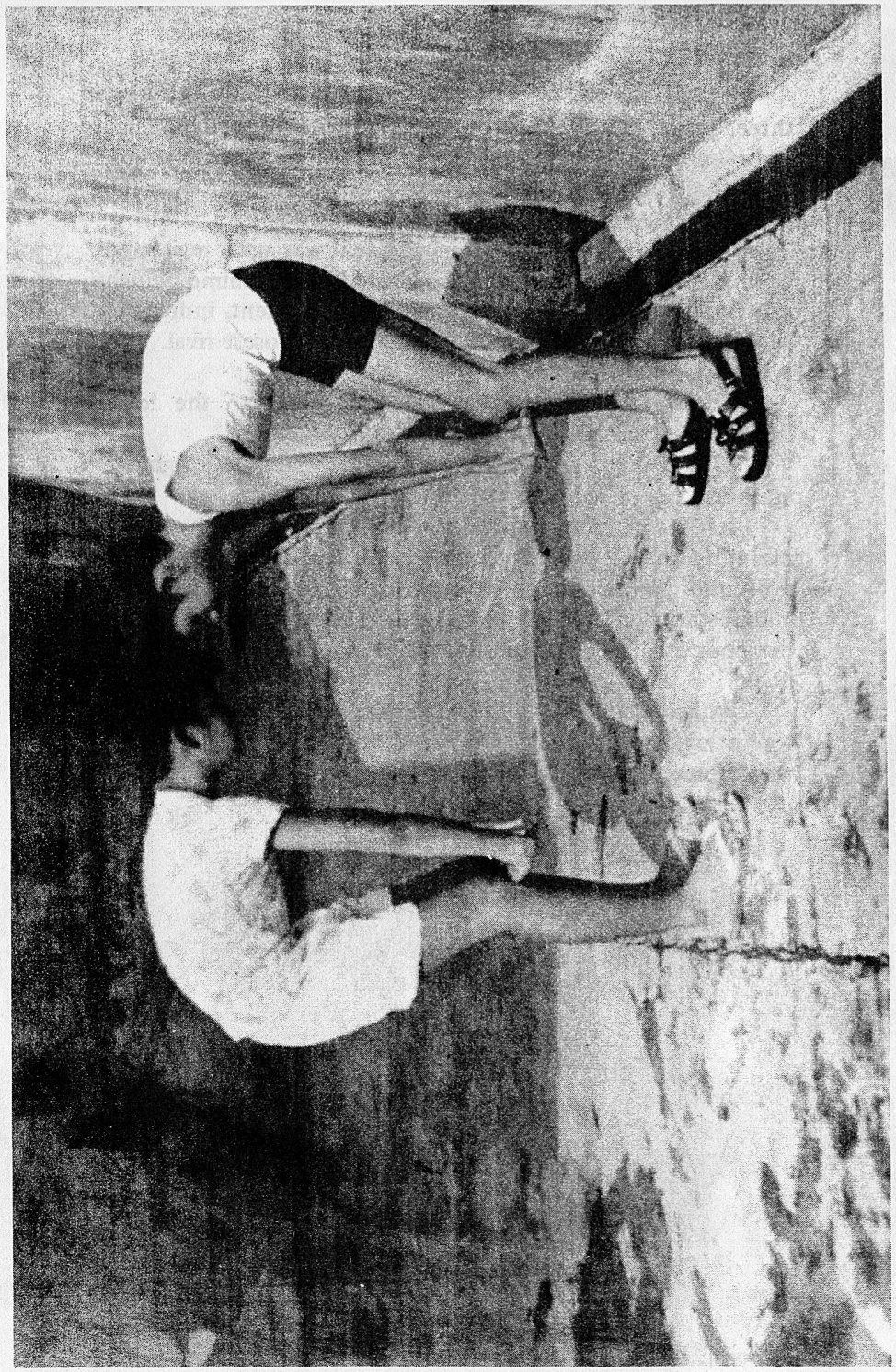
The duplication of that singular feat was again registered by the Philippine team, likewise headed by Geronimo, which garnered in the second Asian karate tournament, individual category, a two out of three score over its closest rival. This event was held in Korea in 1965.

Transferring venue the following year to the local turf, the feat was again duplicated.

This perhaps proves **sikaran's** effectiveness as a fighting method.

Its indigenous nature is the **sikaran's** prime value, assuming that it cannot compete in deadliness with more profound martial arts such as **kung fu.** As it is one more manifestation of the Filipino ingenuity, it cannot but bolster the country's identity. Enrich the country's heritage it also does.

While admittedly the **sikaran** may not possess the sophistication of being fun, it nevertheless suffices as a wholesome pastime.



BINNUNO

As Pangasinense as the **bagoong alamang** is a form of head-wrestling in the so-called **binnuno.** Pangasinan, together with Tarlac, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija and Bulacan, composes Central Luzon.

The different ethnic groups have imbued wrestling with a variety of touches. The Mangyan **lawidan,** for instance, is leg wrestling, and so does the Tagalog **sikaran.**

The mechanics of the game are quite simple. As the contestants push each other with their respective heads in the tradition of the **sinnangdo** (carabao fighting), their hands are joined fingertip to fingertip below the knee. The contestants are slightly stooped, remaining so throughout the contest.

The objective of the game is to throw one's opponent off-balance. Succeeding as such, one emerges the winner.

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